

Reagan Challenges Critics on Soviet Arms Talks

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 Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 27 — President Reagan, accusing those who criticize him over arms control of putting the nation "behind the eight ball" with the Soviet Union, today challenged "would-be leaders" to specify what incentives they would use to get the Russians to return to arms negotiations.

"It's about time to get serious and ask these would-be leaders what they expect to use as incentives with the Soviet Union," the President declared without identifying which "would-be leaders" he had in mind. "Good will and sincerity will get them a smile and a glass of vodka. And you can guess why the Soviets will be smiling."

He defended his policy of building up the military as a needed incentive to negotiation, arguing that the Soviet Union had taken advantage of past arms treaties to increase its nuclear stockpile by thousands of warheads.

Mr. Reagan, addressing the legislative conference of the Independent Insurance Agents of America, took the offensive on an issue, nuclear policy, that Democrats consider one of the President's major liabilities in his re-election campaign.

Critics Are Denounced

"The ones who you hear yelling the loudest these days are the ones who put us behind the eight ball in the first place," he said, speaking at the Capital Hilton hotel. "Many of them publicly



Associated Press

President Reagan as he addressed a conference of insurance agents yesterday in Washington.

oppose the modernization of our strategic systems, while at the same time loudly proclaiming their intent to negotiate arms control agreements with the Soviet Union."

In reviewing the two strategic arms limitation treaties of the past, the President said he was "pleased" that the Senate had not approved the second treaty. He did not mention that his Administration had nevertheless continued to abide informally by the terms of that treaty.

"No one has paid any attention to the fact that under those two treaties," he continued, "the Soviet Union under SALT I, from that time on, added 7,950 nuclear warheads to its arsenal and 3,850 of those were added after everyone had signed SALT II."

U.S. Lead in Warheads

In the same period the United States also increased its strategic offensive arsenal and, according to American experts, remains ahead of the Soviet Union in total numbers of missile warheads and nuclear bombs.

In his address, the President defended his program for Central America as "an insurance policy to protect against the chaos that would result from allowing anti-American Marxists to shoot their way to power."

He once again hailed the turnout in the El Salvador presidential election, contending that all the first-hand observers of the election, even those who had been skeptical about the Reagan Administration's program, had returned to the United States "totally converted."

Mr. Reagan again defended his position for dealing with the Federal deficit, at first joking that "it's big enough to take care of itself," but then repeating his opposition to taxation as a remedy.

Tax Policy and Economy

"We can balance up with tax increases and lock ourselves into economic bondage," he declared, "or we can balance down with lower tax rates and spending, permitting our economy to break free."

He said "well-intentioned politicians of a liberal persuasion" had brought the nation to the brink of "economic chaos" and had induced "an adversary relationship" between government and business.

The President attacked the Democrats on the crime issue, too, contending that the "liberal leadership" of the Democratic-controlled House was "ignoring the cries of victims throughout this country" in not approving the anti-crime package previously approved by the Republican-controlled Senate.

"Maybe it's time to move some politicians out of office in order to get criminals off the streets," he said.

Just as "ill-managed in the last decade," he said, was national security. Military spending eroded by 20 percent in the 1970's, weapons systems were canceled, and the Central Intelligence Agency "was gutted as long-time agents were let go," according to the President.

"Those in charge seemed to be operating under the notion that a weaker America is a more secure America," President Reagan observed.